



State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations

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Donald L. Carcieri
Governor

March 16, 2010

The Honorable Patrick J. Kennedy
United States Congressman
407 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-3902

The Honorable James R. Langevin
United States Congressman
109 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-3902

Dear Representatives Kennedy and Langevin:

I am writing to ask you to oppose the health care legislation currently before Congress. I have expressed, in numerous correspondences, the many reasons why this legislation is bad for Rhode Island, its taxpayers, seniors, and economy. I ask you to reconsider the adverse consequences of this proposal, and vote this legislation down. While I will not reiterate all of those points today, I think there are a few worth repeating.

The United States and Rhode Island are suffering extreme fiscal stress. Over many decades, excessive spending at all levels of government, an aging population, a declining workforce, and the lack of political will to responsibly reform our entitlement programs have combined to create great risk for future generations of Americans. Our children and grandchildren are already facing the daunting prospect of overwhelming levels of debt and high taxation. All of this will be made far worse if the legislation before you becomes law.

Rhode Island faces a staggering deficit of more than \$400 million in Fiscal Year 2011. If Congress enacts a new entitlement program – one that pushes more unfunded mandates on states – it will make that problem significantly worse, perhaps impossible, to overcome. Tens of thousands of people will be added to the Medicaid rolls in Rhode Island, costing taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars.

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In addition, this legislation includes a number of completely unacceptable state-specific, special interest deals that were negotiated only to garner votes, specifically the so-called "Cornhusker Kickback", the "Louisiana Purchase", provisions to exempt Florida's seniors from some of the Medicare cuts that Rhode Island seniors will face, and funding Connecticut's new teaching hospital. Some in Congress, perhaps after hearing from the voters, claim that Congress will undo state specific deals, but claim the "Louisiana Purchase" and other sweetheart deals fall outside that umbrella. Suffice to say, the people have good reason to be skeptical.

At a recent meeting of the National Governors' Association, my fellow Governors and I participated in a discussion about state efforts to reform the health care and health insurance systems. From disease management to delivery system reform, state leaders spoke of success stories. Governors asked to participate in the White House summit on the topic of health care just days later, but the invitation never arrived.

This bill is not about health care. It's about ideology and special interests. The President promised transparency, yet no one has the opportunity to read the bill before it is voted on. The President and Congressional leaders promised Americans they would be able to keep their existing coverage, but no such assurances exist. Common sense tells us that millions of people added to the system, an entirely new entitlement program created, and unrestrained federal dollars pumped into health care will actually fuel the skyrocketing costs of health care. In addition, this legislation reverses the Hyde Amendment, which has been on the books for 30 years and prevents taxpayer funds from being used to pay for abortion. Regardless of attempts to disguise the issue, the simple fact remains that a vote for this legislation is a vote to spend taxpayers' money to terminate the lives of unborn children. For many, this is shameful, disgraceful and immoral and will violate the consciences of many Rhode Islanders.

I believe that if you allow this legislation to pass, our state and nation will be taken further down the road to fiscal calamity, our seniors will end up with inferior health care, and our healthcare system will continue to be broken.

It is my fervent hope that you will vote against this misguided piece of legislation and vote for your state, taxpayers and seniors.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Donald L. Carcieri", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Donald L. Carcieri
Governor